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Timberland Planning Component

California Department of Fish and Game
Northern California - North Coast Region
Interior Timberland Planning Team

Leadperson

Steve Burton

Abstract

The Interior Timberland Planning Team (Team) has defined timberland planning as a collaborative process in which the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and private landowners develop programmatic approaches to resource conservation. These approaches will occur over varying spatial and temporal scales and include monitoring and adaptive management components.

The Team is working with the timber companies to collaboratively create large scale, programmatic approaches to resource conservation. Since this component is generally a non-regulatory process it can focus on creative solutions to identified concerns. If warranted, formal agreements can be developed between DFG and the timber companies, with the intent that these agreements could be applied to tracts, districts or entire ownerships. Solutions to problems will be based on the best available information and may include a monitoring component. A monitoring component could serve two functions: 1) verification that the agreed upon programmatic conservation measures are being implemented, and 2) the collection of additional information. Information collected may be used to refine conservation strategies and programmatic plans (adaptive management).

However, the review of individual Timber Harvesting Plans (THPs) will continue. Some of the THPs reviewed will be monitored, providing valuable information for development of the adaptive management program.

The Team has identified eight (four terrestrial and four aquatic) priority concerns to consider when working with the timber companies in the development of conservation strategies. Team members reviewed pertinent literature to develop an understanding of how fish and wildlife utilize the multitude of habitat elements found in forested ecosystems. Through the application of this knowledge and professional judgement, a prioritized list of concerns was generated. Several discussions with the timber companies and other DFG functions helped to consolidate that list and identify these eight priority concerns.

Terrestrial Concerns

- Early seral habitat elements (grasses, forbs and shrubs)
- Late seral habitat elements
- Hardwoods
- Vegetation diversity

Aquatic Concerns

- Sedimentation
- Water temperature
- In-stream structure
- Flow

These eight concerns serve as the cornerstone of this Timberland Planning Component and are addressed by the Team within separate modules. Additional modules will include the Team participation in projects or programs outside of these eight priority areas. Examples include participation in data collection and construction of a habitat model for northern goshawks, involvement with private landowners to develop habitat restoration projects for the state listed willow flycatcher, programmatic approaches by the companies to address sensitive plant species, and the preparation of programmatic consultations (best management practices) for state listed and board of forestry sensitive species (Attachment 1).

Goals

- Identify opportunities to more effectively address resource concerns that occur under the current THP review process
- Develop a program that will foster private landowner stewardship for the conservation of fish and wildlife resources
- Develop a program that will effect changes that benefit fish and wildlife habitat on a large (landscape) scale

Objectives

- Develop partnerships and/or collaborate with the timber companies
- Identify areas in which information is lacking and work with the timber companies and other DFG functions to gather additional information
- Streamline THP review process
- Work with the timber companies and other DFG functions to develop programmatic approaches to resource conservation
- Implement an adaptive management system based on a monitoring program that will verify implementation and provide information on the effectiveness of programmatic approaches
- Coordinate with other agencies and DFG functions regarding management of adjacent public lands

Strategic Plan

The first step in the development of this Timberland Planning Component was to identify the major concerns on which Team needs to focus. This first step has been completed, however, this is a dynamic process that needs to remain flexible as priorities change.

The development of planning modules was the second step. Each member of the team has developed planning modules for these programmatic approaches that are available for public review.

Concurrent with the development of the modules, the Team and the timber companies need to develop a partnership based on trust. The Team needs to trust that the timber companies are dedicated to this collaborative process and that the programmatic approaches identified are being implemented. The timber companies need to trust that the Team is committed to working collaboratively with them outside of its traditional regulatory role. Trust between the Team and the timber companies must be built on honesty, integrity, and commitment while recognizing constraints and abilities on both sides. Economics, laws and regulations, decision making ability of employees, good science and the best available data all must be considered when developing these partnerships.

The Team has already taken steps to foster partnerships with the timber companies. The Team and other DFG Functions have made staff time available to the timber companies for the development of programmatic approaches to resource conservation. DFG has also identified funding sources and hired temporary staff to begin habitat assessment on a landscape scale. This information will be available to the companies, and the Team encourages the companies to be proactive and participate in the development of protocols, collection and analysis of this information.

Monitoring

Implementation monitoring will insure the programmatic approaches identified are being completed.

Effectiveness monitoring will require coordination between the Team, other DFG functions and the timber companies to develop monitoring protocols. These monitoring protocols will be specific to each programmatic plan. However, these monitoring efforts need to include standardized collection of the data (i.e., canopy closure, stream flow, temperature, humidity, etc.) that will be common to many sites. This standardized data collection will allow for the development of a single data base that will be available to all interested parties.

Adaptive Management

Finally, there must be feedback between the Team, other DFG functions and the timber companies. This feedback will be part of an adaptive management process. Monitoring of programmatic plans and communication among Team members and between the different groups will identify shortcomings and strengths in the process. The program can then be modified to provide conservation of the resources of concern while allowing the timber companies to efficiently conduct their operations.

Measures of Success

Success will be measured by the extent to which the following are met:

- Identification of the Team's major concerns
- Identification of programmatic approaches for resource conservation on private timberlands
- Development of one programmatic approach to resource conservation in cooperation/collaboration with each timber company
- Collaborative development of one information product (e.g., models, maps, targets, etc.) per timber company
- Implementation monitoring conducted for one module per timber company
- Effectiveness monitoring implemented for one module per timber company

Attachment 1

List of Modules and Leadperson Identified

Timberland Planning
Early Seral Module - Steve Burton
Snag Module - Brett Furnas
Hardwood Module - Joe Croteau
Terrestrial Vegetation and Habitat Diversity Module - Pete Figura
Programmatic Streambed Alteration Agreement (PSAA) Module - Curt Babcock
Road Management Module - Curt Babcock
Watercourse Classification Module - Jennifer Bull
Sensitive Plant Conservation and Management Module - Pete Figura
Northern Goshawk Module - Brett Furnas
Greater Sandhill Crane Module - Joe Hobbs
Willow Flycatcher Module - Joe Hobbs